

AMENDMENT

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
 - i) a swab which is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles or collagen particles; and
 - ii) a support fixed to said swab.

Claims 2-83. (Cancelled)

84. (Previously presented) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
 - i) a swab comprising gelatine or collagen; and
 - ii) a support attached to said swab.

85. (Currently amended) The device according to claim 84, wherein the swab is selected from the group consisting of a gelatine-based sponge, collagen-based sponge, microfibrillar gelatine ~~or~~ and microfibrillar collagen.

86. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84 wherein the swab is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles or collagen particles.

~~87. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen are of natural or synthetic origin.~~

88. (Currently amended) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 30 g/g, ~~or at least 40 g/g as determined by the method of Example 3~~ USP Method "Absorbable Gelatine Sponge: Water Absorption".

89. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge, the collagen-based sponge, the microfibrillar gelatine or the microfibrillar collagen have pores with an average pore size of about 10 nm to about 2 mm.

90. (Currently amended) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of from about 1 μ m to about 1 mm, ~~from about 5 μ m to about 0.5 mm, from about 5 μ m to about 0.25 mm, from about 10 μ m to about 0.25 mm, or from about 10 μ m to about 0.1 mm.~~

91. (Previously presented) A kit comprising
i) a device according to claim 84; and
ii) an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent and a dispersion agent.

92. (Previously presented) The kit according to claim 91, wherein said neutral diluent is selected from the group consisting of saline, saline peptone, buffered saline peptone, Ringer solution and an organic or inorganic buffer.

93. (Previously presented) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising making contact between the swab of the device of claim 84 and the target.

~~94. (Previously presented) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising making contact between the swab of the kit of claim 91 and the target.~~

95. (Currently amended) A method of ~~qualitatively or quantitatively~~ for sampling an area ~~for content of~~ a target comprising:

i) ~~wet-sampling~~ swiping the surface of the area with a pre-wetted swab comprising a gelatine-based or a collagen-based sponge and a support attached to the swab; and

ii) ~~dry-sampling~~ swiping the area pre-wetted in step (i) with the device according to claim 1, thereby recovering the target from said pre-wetted area with the swab.

96. (Currently amended) The method according to any one of claims 93[[-]] to 95 further comprising the transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

97. (Previously presented) A method of lowering the amount of a target in a sample area comprising making contact between the swab of the device of claim 84 and at least a portion of said sample area, so that the target adheres to the swab, said method further comprising transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

98. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95, wherein the collection or sampling is from a collection medium selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

99. (Previously presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95 or 97, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a micro-organism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

100. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 99, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

101. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the digestion of the gelatine or collagen.

102. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the washing of target from the gelatine or collagen.

103. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 101, wherein the digestion comprises the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

104. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 101, further comprising the extraction of the target by membrane filtration.

105. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

106. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 96, wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

107. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84, wherein the swab is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles.

108. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from a mammal.

109. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from a marine mammal.

110. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from porcine, bovine, fish, crayfish or vegetables.

111. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 40 g/g as determined by USP Method "Absorbable Gelatine Sponge: Water Absorption".

112. (New) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of from about 5 μm to about 0.5 mm.

113. (New) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of from about 5 μm to about 0.25 mm.

114. (New) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of from about 10 μm to about 0.25 mm.

115. (New) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of from about 10 μm to about 0.1 mm.

116. (New) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
i) a swab consisting essentially of gelatine; and
ii) a support attached to said swab.

117. (New) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
~~i) a swab consisting essentially of collagen; and~~
ii) a support attached to said swab.

118. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein the micro-organism is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, bacterial spores, archaea, yeast and fungi.

119. (New) The method of claim 99, wherein the mammalian cell is a cell from blood plasma.

120. (New) The method of claim 119, wherein the mammalian cell is selected from the group consisting of leukocytes, erythrocytes, and thrombocytes.

121. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge contains at least 50% gelatine.

122. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the collagen-based sponge contains at least 50% collagen.

123. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 1000 nm.

124. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 400 nm.

125. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 1000 μm .

126. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 500 μm .

127. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 100 μm .

128. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein at least 10% of the pores have a size of less than 10 μm .

129. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 5 g/g as determined by USP Method "Absorbable Gelatine Sponge: Water Absorption".

130. (New) A method for cultivation of a micro-organism or a mammalian cell, said method comprising the steps of:

- i) contacting the device according to claim 1 with a target contained in a sample, wherein said target binds to the particles of the swab of the device,
- ii) injecting a liquid growth medium into the swab of the device,
- iii) allowing in situ growth of the bound micro-organism or mammalian cell in the swab,
- iv) transferring the swab to a container with a liquid growth medium, and
- v) allowing for cultivation of the micro-organisms or mammalian cells in said liquid growth medium.

131. (New) The method of claim 130 comprising the further step of characterizing the cultivated micro-organisms or mammalian cells.

132. (New) The method of claim 131, wherein the characterizing involves a qualitative determination of the micro-organism or mammalian cell.

133. (New) The method of claim 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a food production line.

134. (New) The method of claims 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a health clinic or a hospital.

135. (New) The method of claims 130, wherein the sample is obtained from an open wound in an individual.

136. (New) The method of claims 135, wherein the open wound is a surgical wound.